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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003828

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [IZ](#) [TU](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: KIRKUK/ARTICLE 140: SENIOR SUNNI POLITICIAN'S
VIEWS ON DISPOSITION OF KIRKUK

REF: A. ANKARA 2790 (NOTAL)
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 36XX (NOTAL/BARZANI MEMCON)
[1](#)C. BAGHDAD 3595 (EXDIS)

Classified by Senior Political Adviser David D. Pearce for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (S) During a November 20 introductory meeting, senior Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) official and Council of Representatives (CoR) member Ayad al-Samaraie provided Senior Adviser Pearce his views on Kirkuk and Article 140 implementation. Samaraie, expressing his personal thoughts, believed it best if Kurdish borders remain unchanged for the short/medium term, due to the likelihood of violent interference by Iran and Turkey. He agreed there needs to be agreement by political leaders on a process to address the issue, to address elevated Kurdish expectations and Arab resentments which feed into the insurgency and fuel false impressions of tacit USG acceptance of Kurdish encroachments. Both agreed that a solution on Article 140 will likely require Presidency Council involvement (and United Nations assistance) to reach an acceptable outcome. Samaraie predicted Kurdish resistance to a strong UN role to resolve the issue. He believed it useful for Pearce to travel to the north, and offered names and groups to meet with in Ninewa and the northern provinces to assess local views. End summary.

KRG Expands, Neighbors Interfere

[1](#)2. (S) In an introductory meeting on November 20 with senior IIP parliamentarian Ayad al-Samaraie, Senior Political Adviser Pearce conveyed the USG's strong interest in a fair, transparent, and agreed process to address the issues of Kirkuk and Article 140. Samaraie, expressing his personal views, thought it best if the borders of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) remained unchanged for the short/medium term ("until some other time") while Iraq's state institutions strengthen sufficiently to address border alterations. "Once Iraq is strong enough," he said, "even if Kirkuk decides to join the KRG, no one can object." Based on his recent consultations in Ankara and Tehran, Samaraie understands the Turks and Iranians to be extremely anxious over any moves by the KRG to increase its territory and resources, which they would interpret as laying the groundwork for future separation and independence by the region, with implications for their own populations. Should events move in this direction, he predicted, the neighbors would not sit back and watch; "they will interfere if this is not handled correctly." This was a danger that the Kurds and the GOI had to be mindful of, he added. One possible solution, he opined, is to let Kirkuk be "its own region." It would be an

Iraqi province separated from the KRG, and governed jointly by the various ethnic groups there, but the Kurds would quite possibly have a majority population and thus gain de facto control of the province's affairs.

Status Quo Problematic; Need Process

13. (S) Pearce pointed out the risks of leaving the issue to fester: elevated Kurdish expectations on the one hand, and Arab apprehensions about Kurdish inroads on the other. On the latter issue, Arab fears were feeding into the insurgency, particularly in Ninewa Province where there was strong Arab resentment at perceived disproportionate Kurdish influence in provincial government (Comment: Due, of course, to the Arab boycott of provincial elections. End comment). There was an erroneous impression among Iraq's Arabs, Pearce said, that Coalition Forces and the GOI were complicit in Kurdish expansionism. Samaraie agreed, but noted his opinion was one thing; what position his party would take on the matter was something else. He acknowledged that if the Kurds continued to press, the issue could not be resolved in the Article 140 Committee and would need to go to the Presidency Council for added traction. If the issue moved to the Presidency Council, he added, it is likely the GOI would ask the United Nations to help sort out the issue. But, he added, the Kurds "don't want to give responsibility (for the issue) to the UN; they'll want to solve it among Iraqis."

U.S. Policy, Next Steps

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14. (S) Pearce said that the U.S. interest lay in a fair, transparent, and agreed process. Establishment of such a process was something that the Leaders and their Deputies could actually achieve. Just putting a process for resolving the complex Article 140 issues in place, he added, could help with progress on other issues. The issue had to be addressed soon. Samaraie, discussing a possible visit by Pearce to the northern provinces to assess local views, offered suggestions for people and groups with whom he should meet.

Comment

15. (S) Samaraie appeared to be unaware of recent stirrings among the Kurdish leadership and in Turkey in favor of a UN role on the Article 140 issue. However, it was noteworthy that he too appeared to recognize that referral to the UN was the most likely way forward.

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